

JAFAR JAFARI: THE PLATFORM BUILDER

Honggen Xiao

School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

<honggen.xiao@polyu.edu.hk>

PREAMBLE

British historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle is attributed with the saying that “history is the essence of innumerable biographies.” In many ways, this also applies to fields of research and scholarship. As the history of a discipline adds breadth and depth to its intellectual life, so biography contributes to the texture and richness of the thoughts embodied by its scholars. Fortunately in this regard, tourism, as a multidisciplinary field of research and scholarship, has its history and pioneers.

This biography, in the form of a portrait, is about a pioneer in the history of tourism studies. Jafar Jafari, a faculty member of the University of Wisconsin-Stout School of Hospitality Leadership, United States, is known for a variety of roles. He is the founding editor of *Annals of Tourism Research*, chief editor of the *Tourism Social Science* book series, co-chief editor of the *Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice* book series, chief editor of the Routledge *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (2000), co-founding editor of *Information Technology & Tourism*, co-founder of TRINET (Tourism Research Information Network), and founding president of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism.

To me, nevertheless, Jafar is best known as a builder of platforms for tourism education and research, and for the advancement of its knowledge and scholarship. In terms of method, this portrait of Jafar is drawn from historical and documentary sources available online or in print, and from the perspectives and narratives of his peers, but above all from my own long-term contact, email exchanges, and ongoing collaboration with Jafar as a great mentor. In the next few pages I will unfold this portrait in the order of his understanding of tourism as a field of research and practice, his unrivalled role as a builder of platforms to facilitate education, research and scholarship, and his views on the future of tourism as a field of research and practice.

EVOLUTIONARY ACCOUNT OF TOURISM STUDIES

In numerous journal articles and book chapters, Jafar has elaborated his holistic view on the evolution of tourism through sequential and at times concurrent positions of what he termed advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy, knowledge-based, and public platforms (Jafari, 1990, 2001, 2007). Informed by his long experience and perspective after serving as editor-in-chief (1973-2007) of *Annals of Tourism Research*, and by the insights derived from his lifetime commitment to tourism, Jafar has developed a classic evolutionary account, which is as much a synthesis of the history of tourism in its development practice as it is a summation of its social science research. Over the past half century he has described, in his own words, the scientification of tourism as a multidisciplinary field of social science

research (Jafari, 2001, 2007). In notable ways, this evolutionary articulation reflects Jafar's pre-occupations and insights along the steps of his academic career.

Jafar's engagement with tourism is described in his autobiographical essay "Entry into a New Field of Study: Leaving a Footprint" (Jafari, 2007), which appeared in Dennison Nash's (2007) edited collection entitled *The Study of Tourism: Anthropological and Sociological Beginnings*. Jafar's engagement dates back to the early 1960s, when he took up his first job as a tour guide during his college student years at the University of Isfahan in Iran. This role as a "culture broker" helped him to see the big picture of the tourism industry and the interactions of its many sectors. This experience was the inspiration for his holistic understanding of tourism, both as an industry and as a socio-cultural phenomenon. His fascination with tourism brought him in the mid-1960s to institutions of higher learning in the United States, to pursue Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Hotel Administration at Cornell University, and later to earn his Doctorate in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Minnesota.

In his early academic career, Jafar showed a notable ambition to go beyond the business and management boundaries of his program of study. His interest in reaching out for broader understanding brought him to view tourism as a field of the social sciences, which led to his 1973 Master's thesis on *The Role of Tourism in the Socioeconomic Transformation of Developing Countries*. Upon graduation from Cornell, Jafar continued his

academic career as a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, teaching in the Hotel and Restaurant Management Program, which was later renamed the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management. In the first year of his teaching career, Jafar had the foresight to create a platform—a journal named *Annals of Tourism Research*—for the articulation of critical voices about tourism as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

With Jafar's love, care and full-time devotion, *Annals* has grown to what it is today. As Tribe and Xiao (2011, p. 8) noted, "Over the years he carefully crafted and nurtured the journal, its standards, its culture and its team—so that *Annals* has become the clear leader and benchmark for journals in this field." In many ways, such recognition reflects the vision of the journal's founding editor in his mission to make *Annals* a social sciences journal dedicated to theory development through multidisciplinary research and scholarship. Tribe and Xiao's (2011) praise also reflects Jafar's philosophy that *Annals* should uphold the best possible standards while supporting the international community of tourism researchers that it has helped to build. In acknowledging the journal's support from that community, Jafar was fond of saying "*Annals* is theirs; it is the authors, reviewers, resource editors, and readers who help make it a top journal" (personal communication, no date).

For many years as editor-in-chief of *Annals*, one of the agonies that Jafar dealt with was deciding what to do with long thematic manuscripts. With 9,000 words being the limit on a paper for the journal, many good thematic

manuscripts had to go to other outlets, due to the authors' reluctance to shorten their works. This dilemma, in combination with the termination of *Annals'* well-established special issues, led to the development of a publication series for book-length works, chief-edited by Jafar. With nineteen published books by the time of this writing, this publication series has resulted in a much greater and farther-reaching development in the landscape of tourism knowledge. As Jafar recalled,

Thematic issues are important, but as the number of submissions continued to rise, *Annals* could no longer afford to set aside one or two of its annual issues for this purpose; hence, the last special issue appeared in 1996. In the same year, the time's harp struck the chord for another cast, *Tourism Social Science Series*, in which thematic book-length publications could perform. This way, a "loss" was turned to a "gain," for a fuller orchestration (Xiao, Jafari, Cloke & Tribe, 2013, p. 358).

Jafar's meticulous and longstanding editorship of *Annals* and of the flagship *Tourism Social Science* book series has enabled him to make an interesting observation on the roles and functions of journals and books in tourism knowledge development. As he put it metaphorically,

books are like ponds which are contained by their very nature and can dry up with the passage of time. But a journal is a stream, a river of knowledge which updates, repairs, and uplifts the body and flows year-round—all four seasons—for the development or scientification of the field. It runs continuously because authors, referees, and editors act as feeders of nurtured waters intended not only to cultivate the perennial landscape of knowledge, but also to irrigate uncharted terrains of scholarship. Chief editors foster and reinforce the river beds and orchestrate these movements.

Chief editors come and go, but the river stays. Without the army of the feeders, the river goes dry. Without their continuous strokes the harp will go silent (Xiao et al., 2013, p. 359).

As the editor of *Annals*, Jafar made it his goal to encourage a holistic approach to tourism as “the study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host’s socio-cultural, economic, and physical environments” (Jafari, 1977, p. 8). As exemplified through a subsequent socio-cultural model (Jafari, 1987), his holistic approach has greatly facilitated the development of tourism social science for years to come.

Building on and extending this holistic approach, Jafar’s evolutionary account of advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy, knowledge-based, and public platforms has added texture and historical depth to our understanding of tourism in terms of policy, development, and industry practices. In particular, his elaboration of a “public platform” for tourism calls for “the formation of a badly needed public standing that will help it assume its legitimate position—side by side with other industries and institutions, in both local and global circles—and enjoy the support it deserves ...” (Jafari, 2007, p. 111). Notably, his holistic approach and evolutionary account have in turn served as platforms for tourism education, research, and knowledge advancement.

THE VISIONARY PLATFORM BUILDER

Nash (2007), in his account of personal histories, tourism research, and scholarship, referred to Jafar as “an important institution builder” (p. 244). Indeed, in tribute to Jafar’s contribution to the dissemination, knowledge development, and advancement of tourism as a legitimate field of study, his platform-building role in this field can be seen from several perspectives.

Advancing Multidisciplinary Tourism Research and Scholarship

In the history of tourism studies, *Annals* cannot be over-praised for its role in enhancing the status of the field’s research and scholarship. In addition to establishing visions and missions for this platform, Jafar’s steering role in the formative years of the journal also involved setting strategies and tactics for “matching the sound with the sense.” This can be seen in the pains and efforts he took to make his editorial team more international and multidisciplinary, and to develop the “academic colors and looks” of the journal. As he cheerfully recalled later,

tourism, like other academic fields, has its own commonly associated symbols—planes taking off, palm trees, “paradise” islands, elephants or camels, and sightseers’ cameras. A glossy publication in those days with such images would make tourism research appear frivolous on academic campuses ... Thus *Annals* stayed away from these symbols ... Its intentionally “dull” looks helped the journal to keep its distance from the known travel images and at the same time close a gap with the academic community. With the passage of time, the strategy of “going academic”—looking, sounding, and acting as such (both in contents and appearance)—became the “culture” or brand of *Annals* (Xiao et al., 2013, p. 355).

In addition to his role with *Annals*, Jafar's chief-editorship of the now-flagship publication series, the *Tourism Social Science Series*, has had equally far-reaching influence on the international tourism research community. With the goal of "systematically and cumulatively contribut[ing] to the formation, embodiment, and advancement of knowledge in the field of tourism" (Emerald, 2013a), this book series represents another holistic and multidisciplinary platform for introducing state-of-the-art works and for enabling the cross-fertilization of perspectives on tourism.

To date, the *Tourism Social Science Series* has presented theoretical, methodological, and substantive contributions from a whole range of social science disciplines or fields, resulting in the publication of nineteen volumes: *Culture and Society in Tourism Contexts* (Antonio Migu Nogues-Pedregal, 2012), *The Discovery of Tourism Economics* (Larry Dwyer, 2011), *The Study of Tourism: Foundations from Psychology* (Philip Pearce, 2011), *Modern Mass Tourism* (Julio Aramberri, 2010), *The Discovery of Tourism* (Stephen Smith, 2010), *The Sociology of Tourism: European Origins and Developments* (Graham Dann & Giuli Liebman Parrinello, 2009), *Explorations in Thai Tourism* (Erik Cohen, 2008), *Identity Tourism* (Susan Pitchford, 2008), *The Study of Tourism: Anthropological and Sociological Beginnings* (Dennison Nash, 2007), *Contemporary Tourism: Diversity and Change* (Erik Cohen, 2004), *Empowerment for Sustainable Tourism Development* (Trevor Sofield, 2003), *Exporting Paradise: Tourism and Development in Mexico* (Michael Clancy, 2002), *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis* (Ning Wang, 2000), *Tourism Community Relationships*

(Philip Pearce, Gianna Moscardo & Glenn Ross, 1997), *Tourism and Religion* (Boris Vukonic, 1996), *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism* (Jozsef Borocz, 1996), and *Anthropology of Tourism* (Dennison Nash, 1996), with two more volumes forthcoming in this well-established collection of multidisciplinary scholarship: *Tourism Social Media: Transformations in Identity, Community and Culture* (Ana Maria Munar, Szilvia Gyimóthy & Liping Cai, forthcoming), and *Geographies of Tourism: European Research Perspectives* (Julie Wilson & Salvador Anton Clave, forthcoming). Notably, many of these titles have now become classics. Several others celebrate the early history of tourism as a multidisciplinary field of study through featuring autobiographical accounts of pioneer scholars in tourism. In 2012 the four autobiography volumes were packaged as a set: *History of Tourism Thought: Social Science Beginnings*. Collectively, these multidisciplinary undertakings, many of which are authored or edited by pioneers in the field, have strengthened the foundation and expanded the frontiers of knowledge in the field of tourism.

Another platform that serves as a landmark in the landscape of tourism knowledge is the *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (Jafari, 2000). This publication aims to “act as a quick reference source or guide to the wide range of basic definitions, concepts, themes, issues, methods, perspectives and institutions embraced by tourism in its disparate manifestations” (p. xvii). The *Encyclopedia*, which was appraised by a peer as “a fine chronicle of tourism scholarship” (Fennell, 2002, p. 885), demonstrates Jafar’s leadership in orchestrating hundreds of contributors and a multidisciplinary

editorial team encompassing the disciplines of “anthropology, economics, education, environment, geography, history, hospitality, leisure, management, marketing, political science, psychology, recreation, religion, sociology, and transportation” (Jafari, 2000, p. xix). Indeed in appreciation of Jafar’s five years of effort in bringing this community knowledge project to fruition, Fennell (2002) felt that the *Encyclopedia of Tourism* could best be viewed as “a celebration of time, of progression, and of legitimacy” (p. 885) in the advancement of multidisciplinary tourism research and scholarship.

Facilitating Professional Communication and Knowledge Networks

Jafar’s lifetime commitment to advancing tourism research, education, and scholarship is also seen in his active facilitation of professional communication, collaborations, and knowledge networks in our field. He is the founding president (1988-1994) of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism (2013), which has now been around for a quarter of a century. Jafar presided at the Academy’s charter meeting on 21-24 June 1988 in Santander, Spain, with 44 founding members from 18 countries, and with Willibald Pahr, the then secretary general of the World Tourism Organization as the invited guest at its first meeting. According to the Academy’s bylaws, its objectives are “to further the scholarly research and professional investigation of tourism, to encourage the application of findings, and to advance the international diffusion and exchange of tourism knowledge.” These objectives are, in essence, in line with Jafar’s

articulation of “a knowledge-based platform” or “a journey towards scientification” for tourism.

In 1988, Jafar co-founded the TRINET (Tourism Research Information Network) along with Professor Pauline Sheldon (of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA). This accomplishment illustrates another example of Jafar’s foresight concerning the need to capitalize on information technology in the facilitation of professional communication and knowledge networks. As an electronic bulletin board that serves as a means of connecting the international tourism research and education community, TRINET (2013) is probably the largest listserv for international tourism researchers. This network enables them to exchange information and participate in discussions or debates on issues related to tourism education and research.

In addition to Jafar’s above-mentioned roles as disseminator and facilitator, he spares no effort in nurturing a community of learning and practice in tourism. A prime example of such “bridging efforts” is his co-editorship, with Professor Liping Cai (Purdue University, USA), of the now well-established book series, *Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*. This series aims to

have academic and industry leaders join forces in their respective fields to discuss, exchange, and debate issues critical to the advancement of tourism; and inspire a new generation of researchers who can translate scholarly discoveries to deliverable results valuable to practitioners, who can inform the academics of industry best practices (Emerald, 2013b).

This “bridging” book series has helped create a platform for academics and practitioners to share theories and practices. The series has supported collaboration on meaningful exchanges and syntheses, informing how research and practice have evolved or integrated into theory developments, new knowledge, and new (or best) practices.

To date, this book series has brought to fruition a number of publications such as *Tourism Branding: Communities in Action* (Liping Cai, William Gartner & Ana Maria Munar, 2009), *Tourism in the Muslim World* (Noel Scott & Jafar Jafari, 2010), *Tourism and the Implications of Climate Change: Issues and Actions* (Christian Schott, 2010), *Knowledge Management in Tourism: Policy and Governance Applications* (Eduardo Fayos-Sola, Joao Albino Matos de Silva & Jafar Jafari, 2012), and *Tourism as an Instrument of Development: A Theoretical and Practical Study* (Eduardo Fayos-Sola, Chris Cooper & Maria Alvarez, 2013, forthcoming). Collectively, these titles not only foster theory development in tourism, but also enhance knowledge-based practices in the industry.

Speaking of his experience in working with Jafar on this book series, Professor Liping Cai noted,

Co-editing the bridging series with Jafar is one of the most illuminating learning experiences in my academic career. He is a disciplined colleague and collaborator himself and a disciplining yet caring mentor and role model to others at the same time. I have always admired his expectation of perfection in judging academic writings of tourism scholars. The co-

editorship affords me a close proximity to witness an amazing mind whose pursuit of perfection in his own scholarship is equally, if not more, demanding. If our shared philosophy of “no pain, no gain” in scholarship brought us together as co-editors, our shared respect for the contributors to this series ensures that our joint work will be another lasting legacy of the Jafar brand (Email communication from Professor Liping Cai, 30 May 2013).

Additionally, through Jafar’s visiting, advisory, and honorary commitments worldwide, his mentorship and contributions to the academic community span international boundaries and institutions. Among his many titles and appointments, Jafar is the main designer of the Master’s and PhD programs in Tourism and Environmental Economics, and the international program director at Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain), where his facilitation has also resulted in the publication of the *Annals of Tourism Research en Español* since 1999. Moreover, he is a visiting professor at the Universidade do Algarve (Portugal), at Luleå University of Technology (Sweden), and at Sun Yat-sen University (China). Jafar holds lifetime honorary professorships at Bundelkhand University (India) and Huaqiao University (China). He serves on the academic advisory committee of the China Tourism Academy (China), and on the departmental review panel of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. As an outgrowth of Jafar’s facilitation of cross-cultural collaborations and academic partnerships, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* has, since 2012, crossed language boundaries to set up a second editorial office at Sun Yat-sen University’s School of Business, as a

strategy in response to the rapid development of hospitality and tourism research and practice in Asia and the Pacific.

Among his many honors, Jafar is the recipient of the 2005 United Nations World Tourism Organization's Ulysses Award for Excellence in the Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge (UNWTO Knowledge Network, 2013). He was also awarded an honorary doctorate by the Universitat de les Illes Balears in 1998. In his honorary speech, presented on the occasion of his *doctor honoris causa* ceremony held on 18 May 1999 at the campus of the awarding institution in Palma (Mallorca), Jafar reflected on the progression of tourism as a field of research and practice:

In a nutshell, tourism is on its way, with a definitive sense of direction and purpose. As a Chinese proverb suggests, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Tourism is already beyond the initial steps, and its scientific journey is clearly in progress, aiming at new frontiers, heading to new horizons. The prime beneficiaries of this scientific achievement will be the tourism industry itself and the governments that capitalize on it—as tourism utilizes the growing store of basic and applied knowledge to everyone's advantage ... (Jafari, 1999, no page).

Despite his numerous achievements and busy schedule, Jafar is an approachable person for the authors, editors, and reviewers who work with him. He is a great mentor for young academics who are beginning their careers in tourism education and research. To offer an anecdotal example, my own growth as a tourism academic has benefitted greatly from Jafar's guidance and inspiration. Having a background in humanities and

traditional social sciences, I became involved with tourism education in 1989, through a highly economic and business-oriented program at Huaqiao University (China). At that time, I was questioning my involvement in tourism education. In fact, I did not firmly decide to pursue an academic career in tourism until I “accidentally discovered” *Annals of Tourism Research* one day in the university library’s past periodical shelves. Judging from the dust on its cover and the fragrance of print from its pages, I could tell I was the first to read these volumes. I was immediately impressed by the social science and the almost humanistic perspectives on tourism, which resonated with my previous studies. By about 1993, after reading all of the available past volumes, I was at the point of checking and waiting for the latest issue of *Annals* to arrive and be placed on the “current-issue” shelf.

In 1997, Jafar’s efforts toward internationalization resulted in an invitation to serve as a resource editor, which arrived on *Annals’* neatly designed letterhead, signed by the editor-in-chief. Thanks to Jafar’s trust, I became further involved with *Annals*, by taking care of its “Cumulative Subject Index” since 2002 (a legacy passed down from Nelson Graburn, Valene Smith, and Margaret Swain), and later by working in the journal’s “Calendar” department. Upon Jafar’s recommendation, I also did a content analysis of *Annals* as my master’s thesis at the University of Waterloo (Xiao, 2004). During the subsequent years in my doctoral studies I have had the benefit of being an apprentice, and of learning from a master how to copy-edit *Annals’* accepted manuscripts.

Based on my past experience and ongoing editorial collaborations on the new edition of *Encyclopedia of Tourism* (Springer, 2013), I must say that Jafar is a truly great mentor and role model for young academics like myself. He is extremely hard-working, and his insistence on standards and quality is unflinching. I am really fortunate to have known him, and am truly honored to be able to work with him. I owe him a great deal for his guidance and support of my academic career. In a way, this portrait is my personal tribute to Jafar as a great mentor.

In fact, I am not alone in benefiting from Jafar's mentorship. Speaking of Jafar as a PhD supervisor, one of his former students recalled,

I have learnt a lot from Jafar and the most important things are not the ones related to the field of study, but about what it means to be an academic. He is always courageous and his courage is contagious; he thinks big, good and high ... if a project gives meaning, he will pursue it, not looking at all the obstacles, but making things happen. He is so hard working, and very humble. I have seen him start so many projects, connect so many people, helping ideas to come through and then keeping himself in the background ... I think his work has shaped what tourism research and scholarship are today. He is not only inspiring as a researcher. He is extremely generous and has a truly cosmopolitan mindset. I think he is a living example of how passion and collaboration can result in great things, despite having very little financial or institutional support. In a way, he is a real pioneer (Personal communication from Ana Maria Munar, 30 May 2013).

CONTRIBUTION AND CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

Notably, tourism as a multidisciplinary field of study has its own history to celebrate and its pioneers to pay tribute to. Although each and every one of its pioneer scholars contributes to tourism studies in her/his own unique way, Jafar, in my mind, is the single most important figure over the last forty years in advancing tourism education, research, and scholarship through his leadership and various platform-building and dissemination roles. As briefly described in the above account, the many “platforms,” of which Jafar is a founder and/or leading builder, have worked well together as joint, inter-connected, and complementary forces applied to advance the status and legitimacy of tourism in the academy of higher learning.

As a genuine response to Jafar’s leadership and his platform-building role in advancing tourism education, research, and scholarship, a community initiative is now in place. On 23-25 October 2013 in Mallorca, a first-of-its-kind conference will pay a long-due “Tribute to Jafar Jafari” (Sampol & Munar, 2013). Speaking of this event, one organizing committee member noted, “In my mind, this gathering is not about an individual; it is, and should be marked as an occasion to celebrate the formation and advancement of knowledge” (Email communication with Tazim Jamal, 22 May 2013).

Yet, after all of these years and a lifetime of commitment, what is Jafar’s concern about the destiny of tourism? Although he fully affirms that the industry and its policy or development practices will progress, eventually to

rest upon “a public platform,” he is also concerned about the evolution of tourism education and research. As he noted in an editorial,

Of utmost concern is where tourism research and scholarship is heading. Our present inbreeding (reweaving the same yarn in different patterns) will not do much for us. The present practice of the new generation of PhDs in tourism—who are busy conducting research on and teaching tourism as a freestanding subject—is most worrisome. Connections to (or dependence on) established disciplines is being lost and importation of knowledge from them continuously shrinking. This raises the question of where we are coming from, where we are heading to, and, significantly, with whom (in company of which disciplines) we are mapping the landscape of tourism knowledge (Jafari, 2012, p. 2).

As an epilogue, despite hundreds of virtual exchanges of thoughts with Jafar and occasional visits on the phone or in person over the years, this biographical account is not free from subjectivity, partiality and/or perspectives of the narrator. As Mark Twain once eloquently remarked, biography itself as a genre is not free of limitations.

What a wee little part of a person’s life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his *thoughts*, not those of other things, are his history ... These are his life, and they are not written. Every day would make a whole book of eighty thousand words—three hundred and sixty-five books a year. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man—the biography of the man himself cannot be written (Twain, 2003, p. 2).

Notwithstanding, as a recap of Carlyle's comment on how the history of a field is the essence of innumerable biographies, this account of Jafar's life relative to the history of tourism research and scholarship is indeed a good analogy.

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